

Daughters Taking over the Family Business: a Gender Analysis

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This paper investigates the succession process as perceived and lived by daughters taking over the family business, with a gender perspective. Despite the rich literature on the succession process in family firms, few studies use a gender approach, though an increasing number of ventures are launched, taken over and managed by women, largely contributing to the economic development. In line with Dumas (1998), Barbot et al. (2005) and Vera & Dean (2005), our research aims at analyzing the succession process when daughters take over the family business. Our contribution is a gender analysis of the process, including the social phenomena of separation and hierarchy, with a focus on family composition. Using the model of Cadieux et al. (2000), we identify at each stage of the succession process, the key actors of the environment, we analyze their interactions and see how they open opportunities or rise difficulties in terms of legitimacy for daughters. The qualitative thematic analysis of eleven detailed case studies reveals a strong influence of the presence or absence of a son on the motivations and positioning of daughters, as well as on the construction of their legitimacy towards family and stakeholders. This study leads to several implications for public and private initiatives.

Keywords: gender, family business, succession process, women entrepreneurs

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to investigate the succession process as perceived and lived by daughters taking over a family business. There is an increasing interest both from the academic and professional world for family firms, which largely contribute to economic development. Despite the rich literature on the succession process in those firms, few studies use a gender approach, though an increasing number of ventures are launched, taken over and managed by women (Brush, 1992; Dumas, 1998; Bayad & Barbot, 2002; Cadieux et al., 2002a; Sharma, 2004; Vera & Dean, 2005). Several authors recently called for further research using gender analysis in the field of entrepreneurship (for review and discussion, see Ahl, 2006 and de Bruin et al., 2007).

Several studies included a gender dimension (including Dumas et al., 1995, 1996; Keating, 1997; Chrisman et al., 1998; Stravou, 1999; St-Cyr & Inoussa, 2000), studying women owners giving up their businesses (including Cadieux et al., 2000, 2002a,b) or entrepreneur's wives or daughters taking over the family enterprise (including Dumas, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1998; Bayad & Barbot, 2002; Barbot et al., 2004, 2005; Vera & Dean, 2005). In line with those latter, our research aims at analyzing the succession process when daughters take over the family business.

The contribution of this paper is to provide a gender analysis of the succession process, including the social phenomena of separation and hierarchy, with a special focus on family composition mainly the presence or absence of a son. Using the model developed by Cadieux et al. (2000), we identify, at each stage of the process, the key actors of the environment. We analyze their interactions and see how they open opportunities or rise difficulties in terms of legitimacy for daughters.

The qualitative thematic analysis of eleven detailed case studies allowed us to understand the gender effects during the succession process, considering it from the daughters' perspective. Our results confirm the main outcomes of prior research and go a step further, revealing the strong influence of family composition on the motivations and positioning of daughters as potential successors. They also show the important impact on the relationships with family and stakeholders and on the construction of daughters' legitimacy.

Conceptual framework

The succession process

Cadieux et al. (2000) defined the succession process on the basis of several studies (including Handler, 1990; Hugron & Dumas, 1993; Morris et al. 1997; Sharma et al. 1998). Their definition puts particular emphasis on the dynamic nature of the process and on the mutually dependent evolution of the roles and functions of predecessor and successor. Relying on existing models (Barnes & Hershon, 1976; Longenecker & Schoen, 1978; Churchill & Hatten, 1987; Handler, 1990; Hugron & Dumas, 1993; Morris et al., 1997), these authors identify a four-stage process in family businesses: initiation, integration, joint management and withdrawal. We will refer to this model when we discuss the succession process.

The family enterprise dynamics

The succession process stands at the heart of family enterprise dynamics, consisting of a set of indivisible systems and subsystems (Cadieux et al., 2000): the family, the enterprise (Fattoum & Fayolle, 2005), the predecessor and successor in-between, and the external environment. Sharma (2004) identifies different levels of discussion in the literature devoted to family businesses, which may be associated with those systems: the individual level (the study of certain categories of stakeholders), the interpersonal level (including intergenerational transmission), the organizational level (including strategic decision-making and corporate culture) and the societal level (the study of family businesses in link with their environment). Different sources of resistance or influence on the succession process in family firms are documented at each level (Handler, 1990; Cadieux et al. 2000). Prior research highlights the influence of the predecessor-successor relationship (Cadieux et al. 2000; Fattoum & Fayolle,

2005; De Freyman et al., 2006), of family dynamics (Cadieux et al. 2000; Fatoum & Fayolle, 2005) and of corporate culture (Fattoum & Fayolle, 2005) on the process. Driving from family business dynamics, we will explore the existing interactions between key actors of the internal and external environment.

Gender analysis

We use gender theory to explore the entrepreneurial process of business succession, as proposed and worked by Ahl (2006) and de Bruin et al. (2007). This theoretical perspective is based on the idea that men's and women's realities are shaped differently by society, through diverse social processes. Gender and power relations are structured around the processes of separation (what is considered to be masculine or feminine) and hierarchy (the valorization of the masculine, considered as the norm). This implies studying the individual in link with his/her social environment. Thus, we will analyze daughters' self-perceptions and cognitions in link with the society values and norms and the others' perceptions and cognitions. Consequently, we don't consider women entrepreneurs as a homogenous group, rather accounting for contextual differences between different groups (Gatewood et al., 2003).

Literature review

The successor choice

Existing research underlines that a family business is more often taken over by a man than a woman. It seems indeed that preferences for men, and in particular for sons, exist when it comes to choosing a successor (Dumas, 1989, 1990; Keating & Little, 1997; Bayad & Barbot, 2002). Daughters are often seen as "invisible" successors, rarely considered as "natural" (Dumas, 1989; Hollander & Bukovitz, 1990; Salganicoff, 1990; Cole, 1997; St-Cyr & Inoussa, 2000). Thus, they often appear as "default" successors, particularly during crises (economic or health problems, brother's refusal to take over the business, etc.), where the leader has no other choice in order to preserve the family enterprise. In that case, the daughter's role is to "save" the family firm (Dumas, 1989, 1992; Dumas et al. 1995; St-Cyr et al., 1998).

Several reasons are mentioned in the literature. First, there seems to be some resistance from parents to consider the daughters of the family as potential successors (Dumas, 1989, 1992; Bayad & Barbot, 2002; Vera & Dean, 2005). So, entrepreneur's daughters meet some difficulties in order to be recognized as an acceptable, credible and legitimate successor by their parents (Dumas, 1989, 1992; Bayad & Barbot, 2002). Also, they seem to be less self-confident than their brother and often have to acquire some professional experience outside the company before they can be seen as potential successors (Bayad & Barbot, 2002). Some authors (Salganicoff, 1990; Bayad & Barbot, 2002; Vera & Dean, 2005) also stress the influence of factors other than sex, including girls' age, family hierarchy and/or the presence of a son. Vera and Dean (2005) showed that girls did not have the possibility to occupy a leadership position within the family business before the age of 40 or 50 and/or after their brother left or refused this role. Some resistance may also be due to the difficulty to accept that the son doesn't want to take over the business (Bayad & Barbot, 2002). Finally, when the brother is designated as the successor (Dumas, 1989; Dumas et al. 1995; Dumas, 1998), entrepreneur's daughters often don't consider themselves as potential successors, seeing their work within the family business as a job rather than under a career perspective.

It seems that there is an important gender effect to explore ahead of the succession process, when choosing the successor. The family composition, particularly the presence or absence of a son, may entail different situations for entrepreneur's daughters. Several questions can therefore be raised: what consequences will the presence or absence of a son have on the motivations of daughters, on their positioning regarding family and business and on the construction of their professional lives? What will be the impact on their relationships with the various stakeholders and on their legitimacy at the different stages of the succession process?

Daughters' motivations and positioning

The literature on female entrepreneurship generally distinguishes between two types of entrepreneur's profiles according to their initial motivations: women who create or take over a business by choice or opportunity (pull motivations) and women who create or take over a business by necessity or obligation (push motivations) (Gatewood et al., 2003). Dumas (1998) studied the circumstances leading daughters to take over the family business and sorted them into three distinct categories: continuity along with the studies, taking an opportunity (especially when meeting difficulties on the employment market) and/or unforeseen events (the father's death, the brother's refusal to take over the firm...).

In many cases, the entry into the family enterprise is progressive. The succession process often includes an episode in the family business as an employee, where the daughter develops a knowledge about the organization functioning (Bayad & Barbot, 2002) and a vision of the organization and of her role within it (Dumas, 1998). Some daughters quickly perceive the family business as their own and want to play an active role and to contribute to the necessary changes. The motivations of these women are very important: they want to ensure the continuity of the family firm (Dumas, 1998; Bayad & Barbot, 2002) (pull motivations). Other women have a "reactive vision" of the organization and don't consider themselves as potential successors. When they are brought to, they are not prepared at all and mainly show push motivations. Finally, some women have an "evolving vision" of their role within the family business, progressively discovering the available possibilities and opportunities. Their initial motivations are often related to supporting their family, having more flexible working hours and/or avoiding the glass ceiling (Dumas, 1992, 1998; Vera & Dean, 2005). These women gradually become aware of the role they can play within the business enterprise, as they accumulate skills, knowledge and increase their self-confidence (Dumas, 1998). So there are push motivations in the beginning, and then pull motivations appear.

It seems interesting to explore how the motivations and positioning of entrepreneur's daughters within the family business are built in relation to their environment and their interactions with the various key actors. It means analyzing to what extent the gender-related social constructs of the masculine and the feminine and their hierarchy may explain the differentiation of motivations and careers of these women, at the different stages of the succession process of Cadieux et al. (2000).

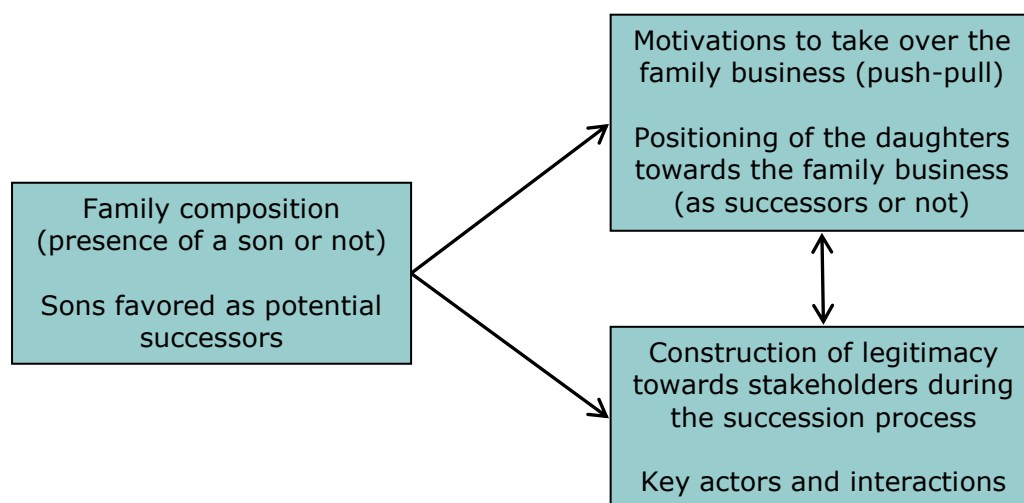
Daughters' legitimacy towards family and stakeholders

Plant and Grisé (2005) showed that the success of a succession process is strongly influenced by the levels of acceptance and credibility of the successor, that constitute the basis for his/her legitimacy. These authors stress (p.12) that the successor is: accepted if he/she is perceived as being in compliance with the corporate culture; credible if he/she is perceived as having the necessary skills in order to deliver the expected results; and finally, legitimate if he/she reaches a position of power in the organization, benefiting from employees' confidence while making a significant contribution to the firm.

The literature highlights the difficulties faced by daughters who take over the family business in terms of acceptance, credibility and legitimacy. For example, they often face conflicts with employees that are not part of the family. Some studies reveal particular problems with senior executives, employees in key positions and/or with important responsibilities since the firm's creation (Dumas, 1989, 1992; Cadieux et al., 2000, 2002b). However, it appears that a high level of education and professional experience outside the company may reverse this trend (Plante & Grisé, 2005). Some studies (Salganicoff, 1990; Cole, 1997; Dumas, 1998; Vera & Dean, 2005) also show that entrepreneur's daughters may suffer from a lack of recognition and credibility toward suppliers and customers. They often perceive that they have to work harder than their male counterparts in order to be accepted as leaders.

It seems interesting to explore how the entrepreneur's daughters, once identified as successors, are accepted and build their legitimacy towards family and stakeholders, at the different stages of the succession process. What interactions can be observed between the various stakeholders and to what extent do they open opportunities or rise difficulties in terms of legitimacy for those women? What gender-related phenomena can be highlighted?

Our different research questions can be represented as follows.



Methodology

Case studies

Our methodology is based on the qualitative analysis of a limited number of cases (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1989). To ensure a theoretical representation, we analyzed cases whose diversity and exemplarity allowed us to approach the complexity of the phenomenon. We made eleven in-depth case studies, with entrepreneur's daughters who took over the family business or are currently in the succession process. This qualitative methodology aims at identifying and understanding gender effects in the succession process, without any objective of statistical generalization or comparison between men and women. The aim is to understand the on-going processes and to study the impact of gender on the succession process, including the phenomena of separation and hierarchy. The method used allows for analyzing the actions and reactions of individuals as well as their perceptions and representations, with a special attention to the environmental context and to the processes. It therefore corresponds to our main objective.

Sample

Given the absence of a database on daughters taking over a family business, we built a "snowball" sample, using different types of actors, including women's networks and entrepreneurship training and support intermediaries. This sampling resulted in diversified cases on the basis of individual and organizational characteristics, including the family composition (presence or absence of a son).

Data collection and analysis

We conducted in-depth interviews with all participants, which lasted around two hours. Each interview was fully recorded and written up. Data analysis was carried out in parallel and independently by two researchers using two techniques: a by hand thematic analysis and the use of the qualitative analysis software "Cassandra"¹ that makes the test reproducible. This cross-analysis strengthened the validity and reliability. The qualitative data were coded and classified by sub-theme, using a vertical and horizontal thematic qualitative analysis approach. Regarding the software use, the first step was to establish a relevant set of "categories" and "markers". The software enabled us to automate the coding and to regroup in several themes (or categories) a set of words or phrases (the markers) according to their grammatical category, their synonymy and their relevance to the theory (Lejeune, 2007). The use of this software helped to identify with greater precision, all co-occurrences in our body of interviews.

¹ created by C. Lejeune, <http://sourceforge.net/projects/cassandra-qda>

Results

Our results identify several gender effects impacting the succession process. First, they show that from the daughters' viewpoint, sons are favored as potential successors within family-owned businesses. We identify the gender-related processes underlying this situation, linked to the separation and hierarchy of the masculine and the feminine.

In link with those findings, our results reveal the impact of the presence or absence of a son, on the motivations of daughters to take over the family business (pull or push) and on their positioning towards the business as potential successors or not. We analyze the existing gender effects at each stage of the succession process, based on the model of Cadieux et al. (2000) that is initiation, integration, joint management and withdrawal. The daughters' positioning as "default" successors reveals a strong gender-related phenomenon of hierarchy. Daughters seem to position themselves and to make their choices with regard to their brother, whose choices are valorized and have priority.

Finally, our results highlight the influence of family composition, in link with daughters' motivations and positioning, on the construction of their legitimacy towards family and stakeholders during the succession process. For each stage, we identify the key actors of the environment and analyze their interactions throughout the process, using a gender perspective. We show to what extent those interactions open opportunities or rise difficulties in terms of legitimacy for women. Again, we reveal the effects of the gender-related phenomena of separation and hierarchy.

Sons preferred as potential successors

As outlined in our literature review, several authors highlighted a preference for the son when it comes to choosing a successor within a family business. Our results go in the same direction. When there is a son in the family, it seems that from the daughters' perspective, he is preferred as a potential successor. Daughters perceive that they are likely to be chosen only when their brother is not interested or when there isn't any son in the family: "[...] my father thinks that my brother is more competent. And also, this is a male-dominated sector; therefore it is more difficult to be accepted as a woman leader. And also, my father was also anxious for me to reconcile work life and family life" (N° 10).

A gender analysis reveals the on-going separation and hierarchy processes. The separation is observable when the successor is chosen, explicitly or implicitly: the characteristics viewed as more feminine, as the family situation and the parent's role, are identified as conflicting with the entrepreneur's role, especially in a sector dominated by men. On the other hand, the characteristics perceived as more masculine, as the managerial qualities or the technical competence, are similar to those identified as entrepreneurs' characteristics. A hierarchy process can also be depicted: indeed, the role of the future leader, dedicated to the son, is socially valued, in the eyes of the father, the family, the stakeholders and the daughter.

Impact on motivations and positioning of daughters

The presence or absence of a son in the family, in relation with the perceived preference for the son as a potential successor, have an impact on motivation and positioning of daughters toward the family business, and hence on the succession process. The situations are very different depending on whether there is a son in the family or not.

First case: the presence of a son

When there is a son in the family, the father seems initially to show his preference for him as a successor or at least to exert additional pressure on him (cases 2, 3, 5, 8 and 10). In that case, two different situations arise in our case studies in terms of motivations and positioning of the sisters toward the family business, with different consequences on the succession process. On the one hand, the entrepreneur's daughters may find themselves having total freedom throughout their career and life, and make all their choices fully independently. Given that the son is chosen as the future successor, the daughters don't feel pressured by the family

regarding the business and the succession: "he [my father] was putting more pressure on my older brothers, but not really on me" (N° 2). On the other hand, daughters on the contrary may be forced to work in and/or to take over the business by the father. This type of situation is characterized by tense relations within the family and leads to diverse difficulties during the succession process.

In all cases, every child of the family is "naturally" initiated to the business life. However, there is no intention of succession for the daughter, as the son is identified as the successor from the beginning. Concerning the integration stage, two types of situations arise. If no pressure is exerted on the daughter of the family regarding the firm, she will make all her choices freely. Some women choose to take up training and/or work experience outside the family business, others choose to enter it directly. They mainly have pull motivations: they enjoy working in the family firm, they wish to work with their father, and some want to have flexible working hours and to be able to reconcile personal and professional life. But the entry into the family business as an employee may also be due to family pressures, including the father's will, for reasons relating to a labor need and/or the family tradition. Entering the family business by obligation (push motivations) happens when there is a strong family hierarchy and a relationship of authority between the father and his daughter: "at that time, I had no choice; it was not possible for me to discuss the choice of my parents" (N° 8). Women in that situation adopt a particular position toward the family business: not wishing to work within it, but being forced to, without any perspective of taking it over, they are not perceived as potential successors and not prepared at all.

Regarding the stages of joint management and parents' withdrawal, when no pressure is exerted on the daughter, her career is characterized by a "spiral" of events and opportunities that she successively takes and that finally leads her to take over the family business. These women will jointly manage the enterprise with their father and take it over "by default", after the brother quits, sometimes after an unforeseen event, as the father's death. Anyway, they mainly have pull motivations and consider it as an opportunity to take: "I had the opportunity to take over the family succession; what my father built for me, there was no way I let it go [...]" (N° 7). Others are forced to occupy this position by their father, who wants to keep the business within the family and who has no other choice (push motivations). The daughter appears then as the only chance of survival of the enterprise and takes it over by necessity, without being prepared. This entails several difficulties toward stakeholders. In both cases, women access a leadership role in the family business because their brother is too young, indicates his lack of interest in the firm and/or chooses to leave: "dad did everything in order that I continue, because he was angry that my brothers did not want to take over the business" (N° 3).

In conclusion, when there is a son in the family, whether daughters have pull or push motivations, their positioning and careers seem to be built with regard to their brother's ones, whose choices are socially valued and have priority. Daughters in that case don't perceive any possibility of succession as long as their brother is present and can potentially take over the enterprise. A gender perspective allows us to underline the on-going processes of separation and hierarchy here.

Second case: the absence of a son

In our sample, the father's choice in terms of successor initially focused on his daughter only when there was no son (cases 4, 6, 7, 9 and 11). One exception however: in one case (case 1) the father had no preference between his children, while there was a son in the family. In that particular case, the son had indicated very early his lack of interest in the family business, unlike his sister. In all these cases, the motivations and positioning of entrepreneur's daughters toward the family business are very different from the cases mentioned above.

As in the first case, the entrepreneur initiates all his children to the business life. However, gender effects can be highlighted concerning the context in which daughters of the family are initiated. They appear here to be legitimate successors from the beginning, in the eyes of their parents. Those wish to transmit their business and initiate their daughter with this perspective. They also encourage her to train in business and management. Daughters then quickly feel the

desire to take it over and position themselves quite naturally as potential successors. All their choices, particularly in terms of training, are taken with this objective in mind: "My father always encouraged me to work with him; he was very enthusiastic about this idea and I made my studies for this specific purpose" (N° 9). Some daughters undertake studies in business and/or management (graduate, higher education or university). Others enter directly the family business and follow some professional training. Entering the family business as an employee seems "natural" to all members of the family. This decision sometimes follows the mother's wish to withdraw from the business. The purpose of this stage is to enable the daughter to do some on-the-job training, with a perspective of future succession. The parents often give important practical and psychological support.

As the daughter was identified as the successor from the beginning and all choices have been taken in accordance with this objective, the stage of joint management takes place logically, as a way to gain experience at the head of the company. Finally, taking over the family business has been planned for a long time and takes place at the parents' retreat. The daughter has usually been well prepared at that time. Difficulties of conciliation between work and private life can be observed when the succession takes place sooner than planned, after an unforeseen event, as the father's death.

Impact on interactions with stakeholders

The initial presence or absence of a son in the family, in relation with the motivations and positioning of the daughter toward the family business, seem to have an impact on the interactions with the different stakeholders, as well as on the construction of the daughter's legitimacy, at the different stages of the succession process.

The initiation stage seems to have consequences on the next steps, particularly as regards the relations with the employees. Having known the woman leader as a child may present some difficulties in terms of legitimacy: "[...] at the beginning, some [workers] wanted to test me as a young woman and also because they had known me as a child" (N° 10). In the male-dominated sectors, age- and gender-related effects can be added, leading to even more difficult situations for the entrepreneur's daughters. Indeed, women's perceived characteristics are neither associated with these jobs (separation process) nor valued in these sectors (hierarchy process). Early relationships with the firm's staff can also be an advantage. Women of our sample underlined the important support that they could sometimes benefit from their employees, thanks to these long-lasting relationships. One interviewed woman had even established a "mentoring" relationship with a former employee of her father.

Women of our sample didn't stress any specific difficulties during the integration stage. They had quite good relations with the staff during this period and did on-the-job training, including through contacts with various coworkers. These contacts enabled them to find the right resource persons within the organization during the last two stages. There are still few contacts with customers, suppliers or banks at that stage.

In contrast, the entrepreneur's daughters highlighted several problems in terms of legitimacy toward staff, customers and suppliers during the joint management stage. According to them, these difficulties are even more important if they are young and in male-dominated sectors of activity. They indicated that, as women, they had first to prove their competence before they can receive some confidence and respect from the different stakeholders. Women who acquired training and experience outside the family business thus benefit from increased legitimacy. The challenges and opportunities regarding this legitimacy are also different, depending on the family composition (mainly the presence or absence of a son) and the daughter's motivations (pull or push motivations). In particular, entrepreneur's daughters who positioned as successors from the beginning and with pull motivations can benefit from good long-lasting relations with the company's staff. They also have contacts with different resource persons within the family business and with their father's consultants. These key actors of the environment may thus contribute to the construction of their legitimacy toward stakeholders. The family atmosphere and especially the relationship between the father and his daughter also strongly influence the situation during the joint management stage, positively or negatively. Indeed, the change of status toward employees at that stage may be difficult to manage for daughters and they stress

the positive role of their father. This is also seen as an advantage in the sometimes difficult relations with customers and suppliers: "Regarding my father's contacts, these are people I know for a very long time and the fact that he [my father] is behind me, makes the things easier for me" (N° 1). Therefore, women who are in a relationship of authority with their father (push motivations) may face greater difficulties regarding the personnel management and the contacts with customers and suppliers. Those see the daughter as "the boss' daughter", resulting in an increased lack of acceptance, credibility and legitimacy. The tense relationship between father and daughter in such situations, linked with the still very important father's role during this stage, prevent the daughter from gaining self-confidence and getting enough legitimacy toward the various key actors.

Finally, when taking over the business, daughters in a situation of planned succession have little difficulty with regard to the various stakeholders, given their experience in the family business and their father's support. They already found resource persons within the family firm and developed a network of contacts to help them in case of difficulty. The entrepreneur's daughters, who took over the family business by choice or opportunity after their brother's leaving, are experiencing some difficulties concerning the personnel management and the conciliation between their private and professional life, due to the lack of succession planning. They will generally rely on competent employees and external experts to whom they will delegate a part of the work. Finally, women who have been obliged to take over the family business by necessity encounter more important problems regarding staff management and in terms of legitimacy toward stakeholders. Indeed, as in the joint management stage, entrepreneur's daughters in that case face the skepticism of certain customers and suppliers and encounter staff management problems because of their sex, age and/or the male-dominated sector of activity. All these problems usually last a few years until women build their legitimacy as entrepreneurs and leaders. In order to do so, they increase their external contacts and use different resource persons, experts and consultants. They participate in multiple and complementary networks: women's networks that provide mostly moral support and enable them to share their experiences, but also mixed networks in order to maintain the balance, especially when they work in traditionally male sectors. They also follow a large number of training courses in various topics related to management and/or to their sector of activity.

Discussion and conclusion

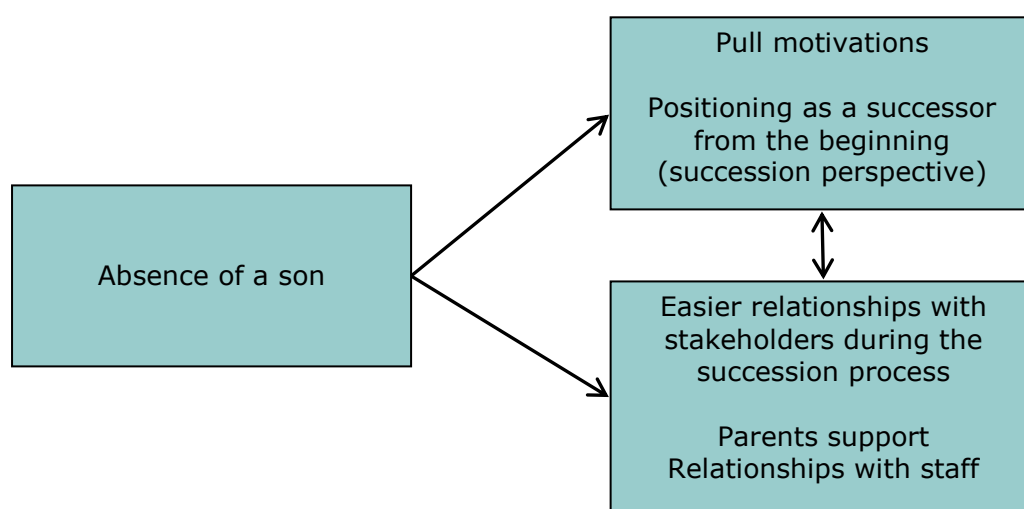
The analysis of our case studies allows us to confirm several findings from the literature and to go a step further in the knowledge acquisition in this field of research. The aim was not to identify differences between men and women, but to understand the gendered social relations that traverse the realities of entrepreneur's daughters taking over the family business. This implied analyzing the succession process as perceived and lived by the daughters and to observe the extent to which it can be understood in terms of gender.

Using the conceptual framework of Cadieux et al. (2000), we explored the daughters' motivations and positioning toward the family business, at each stage of the succession process. We also identified the key actors and analyzed their interactions. We showed to what extent these open opportunities or rise difficulties in terms of legitimacy for the entrepreneur's daughters. The gender analysis allowed us to highlight important gender-related processes of separation and hierarchy of the masculine and the feminine along the succession process. The concept of separation relates to the social constructions of masculinity and femininity, while hierarchy is reflected in the valorization of the masculine, considered as the norm.

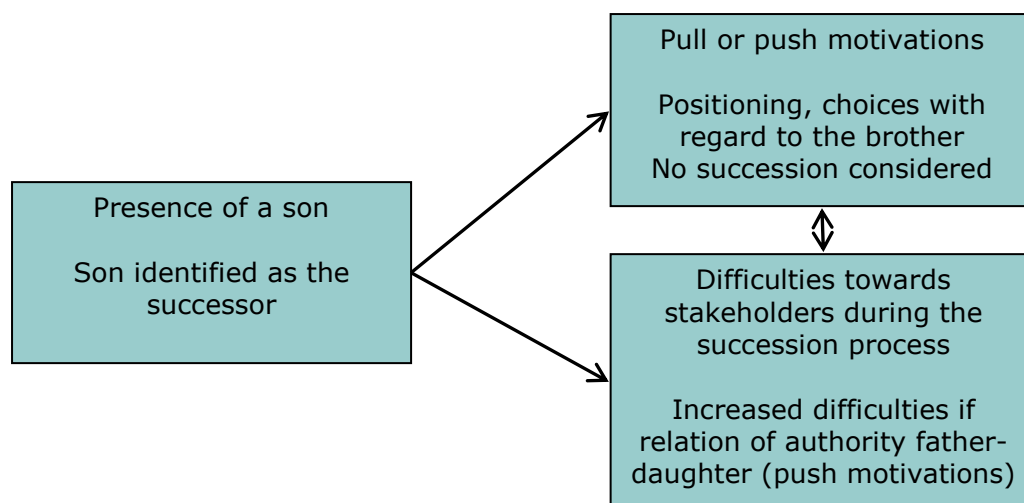
Processes of separation and hierarchy can be identified when the future business leader is chosen, explicitly or implicitly, within the family. Indeed, the characteristics perceived as masculine appear to be similar to the perceived characteristics of an entrepreneur, while those viewed as feminine don't (separation). Besides, the son's choices and position are valorized in the eyes of the family, and have priority over his sister's ones (hierarchy). Accordingly, when there is a son in the family, he seems to be naturally preferred and identified as the potential successor (Dumas, 1989, 1990; Keating & Little, 1997; Bayad & Barbot, 2002), rather than his sisters, who are not even regarded as potential successors. This relates to the notion of "invisible" successors highlighted in the literature.

In link with these outcomes, our results reveal that the family composition (namely the presence or absence of a son), in link with the perceived preference for the son as a successor, have an important impact on daughters' motivations and positioning toward the family business as well as on the construction of their legitimacy toward family and stakeholders, leading to different situations regarding the succession process.

When there isn't any son in the family, our results show that entrepreneurs' daughters are identified and position themselves as future successors from the beginning. They mainly have pull motivations regarding their participation in the family business at the different stages of the succession process. This can be put in parallel with an active vision of the firm and of their role within it, as described by Dumas (1998). This situation is also characterized by easier relationships with the family and the different stakeholders: the employees as well as the customers and suppliers. This is partly due to the strong support that their parents provide them all along the process and also to the long-lasting relationships that they could build with the employees. This situation can be illustrated as follows.



In contrast, when there is a son in the family, he is identified as the future leader, explicitly or not. The entrepreneur's daughters thus position themselves with regard to their brother, whose choices are valued and have priority, demonstrating a clear gender-related hierarchy process. Daughters appear then as "default" successors, confirming prior research in this area. Their motivations regarding their participation in the family business can either be pull or push motivations, mainly depending on the father-daughter relation of authority. In any case, the daughter can take over the family business only when her brother is too young, not interested in the family business and/or chooses not to take it over. Concerning the relations with the firm stakeholders, our results highlighted several difficulties in terms of legitimacy during the succession process, thus confirming prior research in the area (Dumas, 1989, 1992; Bayad & Barbot, 2002). However, the encountered problems seem to decrease and disappear after a few years. We identify the various key actors and show to what extent the interactions with them can open opportunities or rise difficulties in terms of legitimacy. In particular, our study reveals the strong influence of the relationship between the father and his daughter. Indeed, the problems are even more important when there is a strong relation of authority, resulting in push motivations. Our results also show an increased lack of legitimacy toward employees, customers and suppliers in male-dominated sectors, given that women do not have the characteristics viewed as appropriate to these sectors. To overcome these difficulties and to build their legitimacy, entrepreneur's daughters use different resource persons within and outside the business, follow diverse training courses and participate in networks. This second situation can be illustrated as follows.



This study opens avenues for future research. The realities of entrepreneur's daughters who take over the family business cannot only be analyzed on the basis of gendered social relations. Other factors, such as age, ethnicity or the parents' status, must be taken into account in future research. It would also be interesting to explore more deeply the role and interactions involving the mother and the other sisters during the succession process. The family culture could also be an interesting theoretical framework to use. Besides this research agenda, this study also leads to several implications for public and private initiatives aimed at supporting enterprise development: work on predecessors' stereotypes, but also on daughters' ones; accompany daughters during the succession process, especially in the first years, which appear to be the most difficult ones; improve the daughters' self-confidence through appropriate training, seminars and networking.

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